University of Edinburgh

Job Description

1. Job Details

Job title:    Academic Policy Manager  
School/Support Department:  Policy and Planning  
Line manager:   Head of Academic Affairs

2. Job Purpose

Proactively co-ordinate and contribute to initiation, development and implementation of fit-for-purpose major academic policy in specific policy area (quality, undergraduate or postgraduate). Provide high-level administrative support for University's student regulatory activities (assessment, appeals, complaints). Advise colleagues across the University, and particularly senior management and central academic committees, on academic policy and administration issues within specific area of expertise.

3. Main Responsibilities

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<th>Approx. % of time</th>
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<td>Within specific area of expertise proactively initiate, develop and liaise to ensure delivery of University academic policy in support of the University's Strategic Plan objectives.</td>
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<td>Within specific area of expertise, co-ordinate oversight of the University's academic administration processes and operations to ensure compliance with internal and external regulations and best practice. Where necessary effecting operational implementation and maintenance (e.g., central databases)</td>
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<td>Develop and maintain the University’s relationships with key external policy bodies in area of expertise (e.g., QAA, Research Councils), including acting as central first point of contact and co-ordinating statutory returns. Monitoring of output of these.</td>
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<td>Manage the University's student appeals process (for undergraduate or postgraduate, depending on area of expertise) to ensure that appeals are dealt with efficiently and effectively in line with internal regulation.</td>
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<td>Project management of section projects delivering benefits to University as a whole (e.g., ELIR preparation, provision of academic decision information, improvement of central committee operations) and/or line management of section secretarial team (5 persons, 3.5 FTE)</td>
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<td>Provide support to, and deputise for, the Head of Academic Affairs, in relevant areas.</td>
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| Such other responsibilities as may be assigned from time to time. | as required
4. Planning and Organising

- Organisation of Section's cyclical work within specific policy area:
  - on a 1-2 year forward look, preparation for external quality assurance reviews (ELIR), internal QA (Teaching Programme Review programme, MSc reviews), periodic reviews of codes of practice.
  - on an annual cycle, balancing policy development and regulatory changes with University’s approval process to ensure changes approved in good time for incorporation into student-centred material (e.g., course handbooks)
- Project management of Section's in-year projects (currently committees operation project, codification of major recent changes in academic policy) and of smaller scale or ad hoc projects.
- Plan and prioritise own workload to deliver a range of outputs required quarterly/annually whilst ensuring the ability to respond to ad hoc demands generated primarily by senior management (e.g., Vice-Principals) and which are largely unforeseen and immediate.

5. Problem Solving

- Interpreting often complex issues related to undergraduate and postgraduate assessment regulations, student appeals and complaints.
- Monitoring external developments, communications and best practice, advising University on implications and initiating appropriate response (in discussion with Head of Academic Affairs)
- Ensuring consistency of approach to academic policies and practices in a context of greater internal devolution alongside greater external stakeholder interest and regulation.
- Managing support staff issues in Academic Affairs Section on behalf of and in discussion with Head of Academic Affairs.
- Ensuring effective presentation and communication of updated/new policy and procedural issues/solutions
- Proactive in suggesting improvements to current procedures/guidance
- Achieving a mutually satisfactory outcome when presented with differences of opinion on, e.g., policy recommendations, at senior level.
- With oversight of Head of Academic Affairs, developing and implementing University-wide procedures in specific policy areas, liaising with relevant College, School and senior staff to achieve an agreed outcome.

6. Decision Making

Within specific policy area of expertise:

- Proactively identifying when changes in policies and practices are needed or desirable.
- Determining the content of policy recommendations in light of the University's Strategic Plan objectives.
- Advising on regulatory issues in area of expertise, including judgements on complex areas requiring clarification.
- Acting as interview panel member for support staff in the Section and elsewhere in the Department.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

- Advising the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principals, Academic Registrar and other senior managers on relevant academic policy issues, both proactively for future developments and responsively on specific/current issues.
- Advising senior academic managers (undergraduate and postgraduate deans, heads of teaching organisation and heads of graduate schools, heads of school, etc) on internal and external regulatory issues in relation to appeals, complaints, assessment and other aspects of academic policy.
• Advising committee convenors and members on content and development of relevant University policies, practices, regulations, and codes of practice.
• Liaising with senior staff in Registry and College Offices to initiate, negotiate, develop and implement improvements in systems and practices.
• Developing and maintaining the University’s relationships with key external policy bodies in area of expertise, to better anticipate and translate external regulatory requirements.
• Developing links with equivalent postholders in other HEIs to exchange ideas on issues of best practice and policy administration.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job
• At least five years administrative experience, either gained within or relevant to the HE sector.
• Ability to identify and respond to issues of importance to the University on a proactive basis.
• Capacity to formulate and offer clear and practical advice on policy issues, and to develop detailed understanding of and advisory capacity within specific policy area.
• Knowledge and understanding of Scottish and UK academic structures and processes, and of contemporary issues of UK and Scottish HE policy, and their implications for the University.
• High intellectual calibre, evidenced by academic qualifications (a good honours degree) and career achievements.
• Excellent interpersonal skills, including the ability to develop effective relationships with staff and external stakeholders, and a collegial and customer-focused approach to the delivery of services.
• Very high levels of oral and written expression, and IT literacy, and the ability to work under considerable pressure and to tight deadlines.
• Ability to develop interpersonal, communication, planning, and management skills to enable project management of section projects.

9. Dimensions
• Input into academic administration procedures and policies, and the related advisory role, impacts all academic staff and those directly supporting academic administration functions in Schools and colleges, and also directly impacts on the student experience.
• Contacts with hundreds of academic staff over the year.
• Failure to properly identify policy issues requiring University action or failure to monitor effective implementation of procedures would: negatively impact student experience and academic staff; negatively impact on external reviews of the University’s academic provision and processes; and would have potential reputational impact for University.

10. Job Context and any other relevant information
• The postholder must maintain some basic awareness of developments in other policy areas, and administrative developments more generally across the University, so as to identify with the Head of Academic Affairs their possible positive or negative interactions in relation to their work.